

THE AUTUMN 2014 SERIES

'Liverpool on the Move'

New Thinking about Connectivity in Liverpool

Engage Liverpool CIC invited architects, urban designers, transport planners, campaigners and city councillors to join us for our Autumn seminar series in 2014.

The result was an explosion of New Ideas about how we get around our city – and how we make our streets safer and greener.

And for the first time, there was clear agreement among local residents and invited experts that cars are no longer the priority. We must re-balance our streets.

The International Perspective

Keynote Speaker: Oliver Schulze, Architect (Copenhagen)

Recommendation #1: Streets are for People, not just Cars

Streets are the key bearers of shared urban culture. A street must be so much more than a drainage channel for moving people from A to B. A street must be “a corridor for life”.

This is not just about benches, trees, and clean pavements. This is about the whole space: redesigning the entire 'ground floor' of a neighbourhood so that moving through it, or simply being in it, is comfortable, sociable and healthy.

This is exactly what Oliver Schulze and others have done in New Road, Brighton: slow the traffic down, and give the 'ground floor' back to everybody, making it safe to walk and cycle. The result is a Pedestrian Priority street (sometimes called a 'shared street'). You can still drive down New Road (there are no signs saying you can't drive here), but the street is laid out in such a way that it is clear that this is public space.

The changes made to New Road have seen a 22% increase in cycling, a 162% increase in pedestrians, and a 600% increase in 'stationary activity' (the delight of doing nothing !) Car speeds have fallen to an average 13mph and businesses on the street are thriving.

Recommendation #2: 'Copenhagenise'

40 years ago Copenhagen was just as car-clogged as anywhere else. Now 41% of the population arriving at work or education do so on bikes. Carbon emissions are falling year on year and the city is on its way to achieving its goal of becoming carbon-neutral in 2024. No surprise that Copenhagen was European Green Capital City 2014.

But how did they get there? How do you 'Copenhagenise' a city?

- Prioritise Vulnerable Communities.
Pedestrians are the number one priority, then cyclists, then trains, buses - and, only

then, private cars. So, when making any decision about how we get around our city, ask ourselves, " what are the needs of the most vulnerable communities?"

- Make the Modal Switch Comfortable.
There is no such thing as a pedestrian, a cyclist, a passenger or a driver. Most of us are all of these things at different times. So make it easy to migrate from one 'mode' to another. Make it easy to park your bike, or car, and become a pedestrian. Or pick up your bike and put it on a train.
- Keep it Close and Walkable.
This is called the 'proximity of life and movement'. Connect people with places they want to go and don't put everything in the centre. Every neighbourhood should be walkable, sociable and interesting. In Copenhagen, 96% of residents live within 15 minutes walk of a park or recreational area.

The National Perspective

Keynote Speakers: Chris Carter, Nottingham City Council

Alistair Cox, Bristol City Council

Alice Irvine, Sustrans

Bristol is European Green Capital City 2015, the first city in the UK to be awarded the title. It is an enviable achievement and they've done it by changing "the balance of the streets: removing the blight of heavy transport and opening up our streets to people." As Bristol's elected Mayor, George Ferguson, is often quoted, "It's all about the people, stupid."

Cycling has been at the heart of the changes in Bristol. Mayor Ferguson says that "cyclists are the people who are most doing their bit to improve Bristol's environment." While the average Local Authority spend on cycling is just £2 per person per year, Bristol is spending £16 per person. Dutch-style segregated cycle paths are planned, costing up to £150m.

Which brings us to money, and how we pay for making the changes we want to make to the way we get around our city. Liverpool city councillor Liam Robinson spoke about the importance of finding local funding streams - and this is the third recommendation:

Recommendation #3: Identify Local Revenue Streams

- Workplace Parking Levy
The Transport Act 2000 enables councils to charge a Workplace Parking Levy to reduce congestion in cities. Nottingham City Council has introduced such a levy on private companies with more than 10 commuter parking places of £375 per space, which will raise approximately £9m per year. This extra income will be spent on infrastructure in Nottingham: extending the tram line, refurbishing the station, and converting a fleet of 60 buses to electric, giving Nottingham the largest number of electric buses in Europe.
- Community Infrastructure Levy
The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 enable councils to charge a levy on developments (this is in effect a tax on developers) which can then be used for the benefit of the local area. Bristol City Council uses a Community Infrastructure Levy to help pay for Bus Rapid Transit and to improve existing parks and green spaces. In Liverpool, Sustrans have argued that a Community Infrastructure Levy can help fund cycling. This suggestion has been included in Liverpool City Council's Cycling Strategy 2014-2026.

The Local Perspective

David Brown, Chief Executive, Merseytravel

Martin Cassini, Equality Streets

Dawn Coward, Ryder Architecture

Mayor Joe Anderson, the keynote speaker for this seminar, could not attend. Instead he sent a video message in which he said he would meet with representatives of Engage Liverpool to discuss the recommendations of the seminars. Regrettably, to date, this has not been possible.

Recommendation #4: Seek out World-Class Street Designers

Liverpool has secured an initial tranche of £50 million in funding to invest in highways infrastructure in the city. For many audience members, this was the first time they had heard about this funding and they were keen to find out how this money was to be spent.

Many people liked the idea of a website that clearly and accurately would set out how the £50m budget was to be allocated: where, on what, and when? Others suggested that planners should go and talk to members of the public to find out what they want to happen.

There was clear agreement that Merseytravel and our city leaders can avoid the mistakes associated with previous highways regeneration schemes by seeking out world-class street designers and urban architects. Don't keep it all in-house.

Martin Cassini, of Equality Streets, then captured the imagination of our seminar audience with a simple, radical suggestion: "try turning off some of the traffic lights."

Cassini's counter-intuitive suggestion is that turning off the traffic lights actually improves road safety because drivers, pedestrians and cyclists take more care. They drive slower, they are more aware of other travellers and they give way more often.

In fact, where turning off the traffic lights has been tried, such as Poynton in Cheshire, it seems to have worked: more traffic flows through this small town than before, with fewer accidents and injuries and at a slower speed.

But would it work in Liverpool? Audience members were sceptical that an experiment in a small town could be reproduced in a larger and more diverse city. Cassini responded by declaring that he considered this was possible whether in a macro or micro environment. One disabled audience member questioned whether this was really 'equality'. Indeed, the RNIB is opposed to the idea because it is difficult for blind people to cross without audio cues.

Turning off the traffic lights is the end result of a process, rather than the beginning. It is a process that begins with re-balancing our streets, away from private cars, towards people.

- *Recommendation #1: Streets are for People, not just Cars*
- *Recommendation #2: Copenhagenise*
- *Recommendation #3: Identify Local Revenue Streams*
- *Recommendation #4: Seek out World-Class Street Designers*

"I hope Liverpool spends wisely - £50m can achieve a lot if used in the right places - and can be eaten up quickly if in the wrong hands!"

- Oliver Schulze

Links to Useful Information:

Engage Liverpool CIC:
<http://www.engageliverpool.com>

New Road, Brighton:
<http://www.civicengineers.com/our-work/new-road-brighton>

European Green Capital cities:
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/index_en.htm

Oliver Schulze:
<http://schulzeplusgrassov.com>

Nottingham Workplace Parking Levy:
<http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/whatisaWPL>

Bristol Community Infrastructure Levy:
<http://www.bristol.gov.uk/page/planning-and-building-regulations/community-infrastructure-levy-cil>

Sustrans - Healthier, Cleaner and Cheaper Journeys:
<http://www.sustrans.org.uk>

Martin Cassini, Equality Streets:
<http://www.equalitystreets.com>

Engage Liverpool

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